FAR APART INTERVIEW

(Translated)

Introduce the band and tell us a little bit about each member.

Our name is The Far Apart, we come from Luleå, we have been around since the fall of '95, we have released two singles and our debut album "The Blood Meridian Record" will be released on September 13th. My name is Mats, I am 22 years old and I play accompaniment, lead and slide guitar, I write most of the songs and I drive the tour bus. I work with mobile phones. Kalle is a 22 year old blonde bassist, works in theatre and has a cat. His father is Harry and his mother is Stina. Stefan is 23 years old, plays guitar and is unemployed. He has by far the most disgusting fridge for The Far Aparts. Andreas is the new drummer, 23 years old, and I don't know him that damn well, but he works at some call centre in Piteå and is so lazy that he almost got fired.

What is the musical background of the members and what bands have they played in before Far Apart?

We have played in too many bands to mention them all, but none of them are really related to this band. In the beginning, TFA was a merger of two bands called Hairball and Unstained, neither of which made much of a fuss. Like, it was their demo, more or less. Musical background was all over the place. I can only answer for myself, I don't know much about the others. 10 years of playing guitar, 8 years in a band, listening to rock for 22 years. I would think that Kalle and Stefan have a similar story. Andreas, I know, sang in a band called Remain, and played drums in one called Diefenbaker. Now he is also in a band called Supershoot.

How did you come to form the band, and what has it meant to you?

We were just bored with all the crappy music that was being made and wanted to do something better and more meaningful, so me and our first drummer Tomas (now in Breach and Him Kerosene) got together and talked about playing some fat punk rock, and then we brought in Kalle and Stefan who we knew were keen to rock out a bit. It has meant that we have been able to travel around Europe for a while, Sweden for a while, in a week another trip to Europe, release some records and have had a hell of a time. We have made a lot of new friends and met a lot of fun bands and people. We don't really have a deeper purpose with the band, we just want to have fun and entertain people, maybe exorcise some of our inner demons or whatever.

What is the driving force behind far apart?, where do you find your motivation?

The driving force is to say what we want to a lot of people, play cool rock in front of a lot of people, and above all to create music that I think surpasses almost everything else in Sweden right now. We are a really good band, we know it, we don't hide it, but the driving force is and remains to make the absolute best music there is. Then with motivation, I think we constantly strive to become even better, play in front of more people, sell more records and that is our

motivation to fulfill all these goals we have with the band. The better we become, the more records we sell, and the more people come and see us. That's what we want.

Is there a story behind the name?, who came up with it and why?

It's a pretty sad story actually. It was that a few months before the band started, I was dumped by my then girlfriend (who is now one of my very best friends), and I just lay around in my dorm room and made mixtapes of depressing songs. One of these was The Cure's "Apart" where whiny Robert Smith sings 'how did we get this far apart…' and I thought Far Apart would be a tough band name. Now in retrospect I'm bummed that I never recorded Robert Johnson's "Hellhound On My Trail", I probably would have come up with a more cheeky band name then… Note! Robert Johnson = the blues guitarist, not the Birdnest surf punk! It's a pretty crappy band name, but it's a bit too late to change it now. We threatened to do it a year ago with a "The". It's rock.

How would you describe the band's musical development since the beginning and up until today? Has your sound or lyrics changed? If so, how and why?

When we started, we were crappy, had listened to too much Dinosaur Jr and Quicksand. After a year or so, we became interested in the Chicago sound and we started to be influenced by those bands — Shellac, Jesus Lizard, Slint, etc. — which resulted in a more sleazy sound. After a while, we started to get bored with it too, and for the last 12-18 months, I, who write most of the stuff, have been listening almost exclusively to soul and rhythm & blues. Motown, Stax, Hi, Chess, a lot of northern soul, old funk. Nice stuff. And that's probably the direction our sound is developing in, some kind of cross-fertilization of Motown soul and indie rock. The lyrics aren't quite as whiny as before, and are much broader and more colorful. Maybe not so concrete, but a little more emphasis on phonetics instead of semantics, if you know what I mean. I'm best at writing absurd metaphors instead of straight to the point, so it's probably as well to go with what I know best. Musically, I'm curious about most things, and I think that with the next record we'll probably work a lot with drum loops and samples, maybe try to develop the sound into something like Clash meets Slint meets Motown meets drum & bass meets hard rock. I don't know, anything can happen.

From what I understand, you have a new album in the works, what do you feel is the biggest difference between the previous and the new album and why?

The breadth. Definitely the breadth. We've mixed in a whole lot of new stuff and influences so I think that's what you'll notice. What strikes me is how much more is happening in the songs compared to before. Previously we've been very straightforward and quite simple in terms of sound, now there's a lot more going on. That's also the whole point of what we're doing, to always be in constant change, constantly progressive, always looking ahead and striving to innovate. Otherwise everything would be completely mind-numbingly boring. Which in itself is fun, but not for us.

Who are your biggest musical influences, and what have they meant to your music?

It's probably different for all of us. For Kalle I think Unsane, Fugazi, The Jesus Lizard, Jon Spencer and Delta 72 are the most popular, at Stefan's house I would think there would be some Jeff Buckley, Radiohead and Gene, he also secretly digs Jawbox, and Andreas knows I like Barkmarket, Delta and Afghan Whigs. As I said, I'm really into soul and black music in general, I love blues and gospel, but apart from that I never get as excited as when I listen to Elvis Costello, Van Morrison, Clash and Bruce Springsteen. But I usually find something I like in all genres, the only thing I have a hard time with is all the different fucking metal genres, death, black, power, whatever, and classical music. I hate it when it gets so pompous and bloated. And then I hate progressive rock. There's nothing worse. I'm completely sold on dance music right now, there's been so much great house this year. The Basement Jaxx album was absolutely fantastic and fulfilled all my expectations, Armand van Helden was awesome, very good singles from Phats & Small, Pete Heller, anything goes. The foundation is disco, hip-hop and funk, which I love.

What topics do your lyrics cover, and do you think the lyrics are an important part of Far Apart?

I guess everything is possible. Previously it was mostly relationship problems, but now I grab onto most things that fly past me. On the new album it's everything from sex to politics, and from violence to TV's grip on us. I think it can be quite difficult to understand what they're about, because I use a lot of metaphors and paraphrases. Some are just taken from the air, as I said, I'm not really interested in actually having a message while I'm writing, it's more towards the last 5-6 lines that I start to realize what I'm writing about. It becomes a bit subconscious, what I'm going through colors my writing regardless of whether I'm aware of it or not. How the words sound to the music is at least as interesting as what they actually say.

I find your live performances very energetic, where does your great energy come from? Do you see the band as a way for you to get an outlet for it?

Yes. Really. It's great that you say that, I've always hoped that people would see us as an energetic live band. You know, we mostly sit still all day, so when we get on stage and feel people's warmth and enthusiasm, we go all out. Their energy fuels ours. Also, it's so terrible, unspeakable, utterly boring to see all these potentially phenomenal bands just ruin the whole experience by standing there looking at their warts. This applies especially to all these 'emo' bands, who think you're emotional and come across as sensitive when you just stand there staring at your toes, damn it — you have to show that you want to give the audience something. I don't play live for my own sake, I fucking want to give the audience something. It should be a show, it should be glam, it should be something more than just listening to a band. Admittedly, it has a lot to do with routine, we have a few gigs under our belt, but we are all about offering a real rock show with matching shirts and lots of dance moves. That is what we are obliged to do, as entertainers and instigators.

What does it take for a Far Apart gig to be considered successful?, what is your best concert memory of all time?

The best gig ever was in Magdeburg in eastern Germany last year. Lots of people, it was packed, and everyone was super pumped. So we just went out and showed and Kalle sprayed fake blood in the last song and everyone in the audience just kind of picked. We played incredibly well and looked great, so everything was in order. A successful gig requires that both the audience and we keep up with the music and understand what's happening — it's time for a rock show! In addition, the sound has to be good and we have to be well dressed. If all this works out, you can jump up and cheer that the gig will go down in history books.

You have been described by many as a mix of Fireside and Quicksand, how does this match your own perception, and what is your relationship to these bands?

Fireside comes from Luleå and we think they are OK, that is our relationship to them. We liked Quicksand when we were 17 and they influenced us then. That is all. It is sad that people have such narrow frames of reference that all they can compare us to are the two bands. Anyone who sits down and listens to a whole song will quickly realize that we have very little to do with those bands. Someone said that we sounded like Sunny day Real estate and that is just as bad. But what can you say? I would describe us as a melodic and rock-hard rhythm & blues band. Then people will form their own opinion about what we sound like.

From what I understand, you have received help with the international launch of the seven-inch “Hazel” by Crank!, how did you get in touch with them?, and how has the collaboration worked?

We got in touch with them when NLB sent a seven-inch there for distribution, and Jeff Matlow (the manager) got in touch and wanted to release it under license. We thought that was pretty fantastic, so we said thank you and that’s how it is. The collaboration has been mostly painless, but we’ve had a bit of trouble mobilizing a new release, up until now. Now we’re on G again, so with a little bit of luck, “The Blood Meridian Record” should be out in the US this fall as well.

How does it work with Carcrash records?, what is your attitude when it comes to major and independent labels? Could you imagine signing for a larger label or is the underground attitude too strong?

No, damn it. If we get a good deal with a guarantee of artistic freedom on an OK label, then I think we could sign. It's a bit of a balancing act, what is major and what is not? A label like V2, for example, is a small large label so to speak, and at that size I don't think we would hesitate for too long. I don't think Warner or Polygram would be an option for us. I'd rather be number 1 on a smaller label than number 3459 on a large one. That's what I would have in mind. The underground attitude itself is certainly strong, but at the same time I realize that it would be impossible to stay on a tiny label without resources if the band were to start taking up so much time that it's impossible to have a job on the side. Which is almost becoming the case for The Far Apart. There is so much happening that we are starting to have enormous problems keeping up with everything, due to work and other time constraints.

Do you have any future plans, album releases or tours coming up?

As I said, “The Blood Meridian Record”, our debut CD, is out on 9/13. We’re going to Germany and Austria next week for a three-week tour. There will probably be another album before the end of the year. We try to take everything as it comes, so whatever happens, happens. Our arms are open to suggestions. Closing words or comments? Buy the new album, see us live, crush capitalism, love your neighbor, listen to soul, read books, don’t drink red wine, floss your teeth, don’t eat anything that moves, wash the dishes often, don’t lose your keys, have a good time. Hello and thanks for the interview!